

Community Flood Preparedness Fund Q&A Session, June 15, 2021

Russ Baxter

First of all, let me introduce myself, my name is Russ Baxter, I'm the Deputy Director, DCR for Soil and Water Conservation, Dam Safety and Floodplain Management.

And I guess I'm sort of the emcee for today's event.

Also, from DCR, we have on the line, there may be others, but ones that are there for sure are Wendy Howard-Cooper, who is the Division Director of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management.

We have our floodplain management team here as well, Brandy Buford, Michael Barber, Angela Davis.

We also have with us Matt Dolan, who is working with Admiral Ann Phillips on the Virginia Coastal Resilience Masterplan.

Sorry, Matt, if I got it wrong.

And we also have from our Public Communications office, working behind the scenes to make this webinar possible, Julie Buchanan and Mary Bishop.

Thanks to all of them.

And once we get to the Q and A session, you're likely to hear voices other than mine.

To start off, we're going to do a brief PowerPoint introduction to sort of how we got to where we are here today.

And then, walk through the manual section by section, and ask people to type their questions regarding the particular section that has shown up on the slide, that you might have about that section.

There may be ones that are more general questions, and we'll be monitoring the

chat.

And during these two hours, we will be have a hard stop at three o'clock.

We will be answering as many questions as possible.

We will also be posting the Q & A on our website.

In addition, it will inform the development of a Q & A document that we'll be preparing based on the questions that we get during this webinar,

and other ones that are coming in to the e-mail address that we've set up specifically for this program.

So I think that's that, but let's go ahead and get started.

Just a few housekeeping things I already mentioned that we're being recorded.

Questions and comments. Please put them in the chat box.

I said we're going to do a Q&A document that will be posted.

And if you'd please, of course everybody who's been through a thousand webinars and online meetings in the last year, but if you would please make sure that your mics or phones are on mute.

So the Community Flood Preparedness Fund was the result of legislation that was passed by the General Assembly in 2020.

And it is an opportunity to allow Virginia to become more resilient.

We are looking at prioritizing projects that fit in a variety of categories.

We want to build the capacity of Virginians and communities and others that are eligible to apply for the grants to beef up their capability of preparing and planning for and preventing flooding.

And so it is really a landmark program.

I liken it back to the establishment of the Water Quality Improvement Fund.

This is going to be a good deal of money over at least a decade.

We think, it's not all the money that we're going to need, but it is certainly going to get us off on the right foot and assist communities throughout Virginia to address

a changing climate and the impacts of flooding, whether it be tidal or whether it be from storm events or whether it just be like it was in Culpeper the other day with nine inches of rain in one day.

So, the source of the funds comes from Virginia's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, known as RGGI (reggie), we are 1 of 11 members of the General Assembly authorized Virginia to join.

And we have joined with the other most northeastern states. We're the southernmost member of that initiatives.

And it organizes and conducts auctions in order to reduce power plant emissions of carbon dioxide.

With a goal, as you can see on the slide, of reductions of those emissions by 30% in 2030.

According to the law that was passed by the General Assembly, this is how the money is divided that comes in from the RGGI auctions, 45% there in the blue, comes to DCR.

Actually, it ends up at the Virginia Resources' Authority.

But it comes to DCR from the Auctions.

For the purposes of giving grants and for also for the administrative costs, that go along with administering this program.

Half of the money goes to the Department of Housing and Community Development for Energy and Efficiency improvements in low-income communities, low-income housing.

2% is administrative expenses for the Department of Environmental Quality to run the RGGI auctions and do what's necessary, or to maintain Virginia's participation in RGGI.

Then, 3% is carved off for DHCD, Housing Community Development and Departments.

Actually, it's not DMME anymore.

I keep forgetting the acronyms change, but actually it doesn't change until July 1st, so that's correct.

But it will be the Department of Energy after July first.

But currently the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, which has an energy efficiency program.

And so they get a little bit of money to help that in their interaction with the

Department of Housing and Community Development.

So far since Virginia joined there have been two auctions, the numbers that you see on the screen, there are two.

The first is the total amount of funds that Virginia received from the RGGI auction.

The second is the CFPF number.

That is the approximate 45%, a little bit of rounding there, but the approximate 45%, that is being deposited into the Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

As you can see on the screen there are two more auctions that are scheduled for this year.

Those that are familiar with RGGI, I'm no RGGI Expert, but the auction prices have been higher than expected.

But, again, it is an auction, and it is based on the demand for the allocations that the power plants need.

And so, the auction prices are going to vary, moving forward, likely.

So to say that we're always going to get between 43 and \$45 million.

I don't think anyone can accurately predict that.

It may be higher.

It may be lower.

It is dependent on the auction prices of the RGGI auctions when those auctions take place.

This is the schedule we're on.

We've already met the first milestone.

We released the grant manual not too long ago.

Let's see.

Today's the 15th.

We released it on the fourth of June.

This grant round is 90 days, and as you can see, we're going to have overlapping grant rounds.

We intend to open a second grant round on the fifth of August.

This first grant round that began on the fourth of June will close on the third of September.

And then at the end of September, we'll announce the first of the grant round awards, the second grant round, again, a 90 day grant round.

So in November, we will announce the second grant round awards, or, excuse me, close the second grant round, and then announce the awards in December.

And then we are hoping, for in early, we've put 1/6/22.

That may be a little bit optimistic, but we hope to start a final grant round as early in 2022 as possible.

Right now, we're only giving grants from the fund, but the law allows for both loans and grants.

And so any substantial changes we make to the grant manual that would account for and establish the rules for loans, which is a little more complicated.

There's credit worthiness issues and all sorts of things that are beyond my financial understanding.

But that may require us to put the grant the grant manual out for an additional 30 day public comment period.

So that may delay somewhat the early 2022 grant round that we're hoping to do.

So, that is the introduction.

And so, what we would like to do, I guess, is open up at this point

for questions. You don't have to look at me anymore!

And if you would type your questions into the chat, I'll go ahead and read those questions and then we will have our staff or myself answer to those to the best of our ability.

I hope you will be gentle.

This is the first grant round that we've done with this new fund.

We've worked a lot on trying to make the grant manual is understandable as possible.

But obviously, there's still going to be questions.

And so we will attempt to answer your questions to the best ability that we can.

So if you'll go ahead and start asking your questions, we'll go ahead and start answering them.

The first question is, Is the second round anticipated to be similar funding available to the grant, Round one?

That has yet to be determined.

We will be announcing at the beginning of grant each grant round, it is likely to be a little bit less.

We have some obligations related to the administrative costs and some other things that weren't reflected in the first grant round.

And so it's hard to say, but with each grant announcement, at the beginning of each grant round,

we will be announcing the total dollar numbers that have been allocated for that grant round.

And also, I forgot to mention in my introduction, 25% of the funds that are available in any grant round are reserved for low-income communities.

And that definition is contained in the manual.

Let's see here.

The question about the definition of low-income.

It's actually low-income community that is contained in the code and in the grant manual.

And so we addressed that.

I would refer the questioner to the grant manual.

The next question is, are we anticipating three grant rounds annually?

I think that truly depends on the wishes of the governor's office.

Obviously, we will have a new governor coming into office next year.

Our hope was, it's not outside the realm of possibility.

There may be a decision that it'd be only be two grant rounds a year.

That question, I don't think we can answer at this point because I think all bets are off.

Until a new administration is in place, there is potentially a new DCR director.

That's an appointed position.

The Secretary of Natural Resources is appointed position in everyone in that office.

Ann Phillips is an appointed position, and then obviously, a new governor may have ideas of his or her, well, it'll be his, I guess.

There's only two men running.

It will be up to the new governor to make some of those decisions.

The next question, should we assume that there'd be more emphasis on applying this towards the coast are somewhat evenly dispersed.

I think it's really important to understand that this is a statewide program.

There may be localities that are at least in this initial grant round.

Some of the coastal localities that have been dealing with sea level rise and coastal flooding and tidal flooding that may be better positioned to apply for project grants than others.

But we are very much interested in making all of Virginia more resilient, and so I don't think that there is going to be a bias in this program.

We're gonna look at each proposal, you know, with the same, through the same lens, and work with communities to build their capacity

if they don't feel as though, they're capable of applying for grants yet.

Well, that's why we have capacity building as one of the grant requirements, or is one of the grant categories.

And so, some of, many of you may already know this, and I don't know the geographic spread of the folks that are on the webinar right now,

but some of the most significant flooding events that we have had in the last three years have been in Southwest Virginia.

And so, certainly, flooding is not limited to our Coast, and, as I just said, Culpeper got nine inches of rain the other day.

And those things are not unusual.

Pocahontas State Park was under water a year ago, and so it is our interest to help communities throughout Virginia to become more resilient.

Can you clarify the requirements of CFM certification with each project?

Wendy, do you want to address that?

Wendy Howard Cooper

Sure.

Wendy Howard Cooper

The requirement is that the CFM, in each locality, has reviewed and approved each of these proposed projects to ensure that it meets NFIP requirements.

Not just that it meets the resilience goals of the community, but that it also does not

violate NFIP requirements and jeopardize the community standing.

Russ Baxter

Thank you.

Next question, Can the funds be used to steady and obtain base elevations for approximated A Zones?

I'm going to turn that over to you Wendy, as well.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Yes.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And that would absolutely be something that would be acceptable for communities to do.

I would expect that it would be part of some larger scale project or some larger objective.

Not just to do the A Zones, but that is absolutely something that is acceptable.

Russ Baxter

The next question, why do protection steadies fall under planning?

What's the difference?

Wendy Howard Cooper

I would ask for some clarification on that.

Wendy Howard Cooper

I'm not sure.

Yeah, because we did separate those two.

Russ Baxter

We thought we did.

I've got the manual.

Is there a particular page?

If the commenter could put into the chat exactly where they're looking for.

A question was from Todd Fortune.

Todd Fortune

Hey, guys.

I just sent another message in the chat.

Page eight, if they, they are separated and I was wondering, wow, they're not considered one of the same.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Capacity building in planning our group as one category.

Particularly for communities who need that, resilience planning, doing comprehensive planning.

Those types of things studies are just those particular studies that communities may need.

We separated them.

Just so that we can have the delineation between what particular types of things, communities we're dealing.

Is there some reason that that makes a difference, Todd?

Todd Fortune

The only thing I noticed was that there was a different match requirement under the regular circumstances.

If a flood study actually has action items attached to it, why would that not be considered a plan or a planning endeavor?

Wendy Howard Cooper

Ok, so for the purposes of this particular grant, we're putting an emphasis on capacity building and planning for communities that need to build up, to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible

they have the ability to, to ramp up, and that is why we separated it out that way.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Wendy.

Next question

If a locality is applying to develop a citywide resilience plan and has some low-income, socially vulnerable areas, but not the entire city, do they qualify for the 90% match?

They would not, I think they may want to think about presenting their proposals, where there may be a grant proposal that targets the socially vulnerable area.

And that would certainly, you know, the entire city doesn't have to be low-income.

But, if the project benefits that low-income areas, as is defined in the code, and in the manual, then that would be a different situation.

But it would have to be a proposal that would benefit that low income area.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And, Russ, just a note, there is no prohibition on any community submitting more than one application.

Russ Baxter

Yes, thank you.

The next question, would you anticipate submitting an application for a second round, if not accepted within the initial round?

That's entirely possible.

You know, we don't have any idea how many proposals we're gonna get and how much money folks are going to request.

And so, there could be a number of reasons that we don't fund the proposal in the first go round.

It could be because the proposal's not very good.

It could be that we don't have enough money.

And so it could be that, you know, that they're just not quite ready.

They don't really have anything relate that could be construed as resilience plan and are interested in a project.

And so all of those things are possible.

So I would I would say that, you know, just because of a grant is declined doesn't necessarily mean that it is not meritorious.

It just may mean that we don't have enough money to find everything that we would like to.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And generally, when we provide feedback to communities via either their approval with conditions or denial letters, we would spell out what the reason was they were not funded.

So if there was a deficiency in the application, we would tell you if there was just insufficient funds to manage all the projects.

And based on scoring criteria as we couldn't on your project.

We would also tell you that.

Russ Baxter

Then the next question again is about low-income.

Can an entire county qualify as low income?

I don't think so.

We have struggled with this because of the way that the code,

there is a specific definition in the code about what a low-income community is.

It is mirrored in the definition that we have in, it's actually low-income geographic area, it's mirrored in the definition on page six in the manual.

We're not limiting the size of the project for a low-income geographic area, but we are bound by what the General Assembly has told us is a low-income area

And certainly if there are ongoing, you know, offline discussions that we need to have with potential grantees

to sort of narrow their requests or give further guidance.

We'd be, obviously, we're always going to be happy to assist folks in getting, you know, getting their numbers right and getting that definition to fit with their proposal that they're submitting.

Somebody notes that not every locality has a CFM, that's correct.

We will give grants to localities, so someone on their staff can be certified.

Are non-profit organizations eligible to apply?

No, they are not.

The code is very clear about who may apply.

It is a local government, or also we are allowing for state or federally recognized Indian tribes,

but it has to be a political subdivision of the state that has been established by the General Assembly.

So, it is not just a county, city or a town.

There are other political subdivisions of the states including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Planning District Commissions.

There are probably other some of the municipal, you know, Hampton Roads Sanitation District.

I'm not I doubt they'll apply but they were created by the General Assembly and are by code considered a political subdivision of the state.

But I would guess the majority of our applications are going to come from county, cities and towns

planning districts would and I can't obviously say because we haven't gotten applications yet, but that would be my expectation.

The next question is about in kind match, No.

We're not, the manual does not call for in kind match.

Would the acquisitions of private residences located in 100 year floodplain experienced flooding be an eligible project?

With the conversion of the land have to be in an area identified in the ConserveVirginia floodplain and flooding resiliency layer.

I think I'm reluctant to speculate on what would qualify without seeing a complete proposal but I can imagine that being within the realm of possibility.

It is not necessary for the land to be identified in ConserveVirginia.

There are limitations in the ConserveVirginia resiliency layer.

But it is, it is something that we still would be using to help guide some of the, some of the decisions that will be made on some of the grant proposals.

So, again, I don't want to prejudge a hypothetical.

But, that does not seem to be something that would be out of the realm of possibility, depending on the nature of the project, and the size,

and where it's located, and a lot of other details that we would need to see in the proposal.

Can projects be submitted by planning district commissions for grant funds that are regional involving several localities, yes.

The only thing we ask is that the localities that are included in the proposal agree to be included.

And there is materials in the grant manual where that is acknowledged, and that their needs just needs to be a letter of support or some other method.

I can't remember specifically what we call for.

Wendy, you may have it at the top of your head, but we just all ask that you're not asking a planning district, just isn't asking for money

for communities that don't want to participate in the project. Seems fairly obvious, but in any case.

Next question, can you elaborate on the previous CFM question answer?

Confirming ordinance compliance doesn't clarify the requirements for who the CFM is.

The manual states must be an ASFPM CFM, even though only 20% of the communities have a CFM on staff.

We want to build the capacity of all of Virginia.
And it is our belief that having a certified floodplain manager in a community increases that community's ability moving forward.

And so what I would suggest, for those that don't have that, put in for a capacity building grant to get that.

We're looking for the long term.

We're looking to build capacity for the long term.

And we think that that's a critical component of doing that.

The question is, did you mean you will give grants to the community having CFM on their staff only?

Wendy, can you take that somebody?

I need to scroll down in the manual, and that's on a different screen here.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Sure, we will provide grants to any community that has a need for a CFM through their capacity building category.

We will provide grants to communities that have CFMs on staff.

So, no, it is not just grants to communities that have CFMs.

We will provide grants to communities to build capacity to either train and certify existing staff, or hiring staff, and hiring CFM.

Russ Baxter

The next question is: Can match be from federal or private funding sources?

The answer is yes.

And the flip side of that is that these funds could be used to match grants from those sources, as well.

So, you know, we certainly want to leverage these funds as much as possible.

And so, I don't know, you know, what federal rules would govern the use of federal funds for match for state funds.

I just don't know.

But, certainly, I think that if a community can acquire through private funding, the match for the funds, that would be OK,

that the community or the county, city, or town, or the, excuse me, let me use the right lingo.

The local government, as its defined is the one that puts in the grant proposals.

So, they are responsible for developing the funding strategy and all of those other things.

And so, they're on the hook to make sure that those funds come through and that they can meet those grant match requirements.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And to expand on that, these funds can be used and in concert with federal funds or private funds as match.

What you have to be clear with, though, because if you're doing that, you're telling us that that federal funds or that private fund is matched to our grant.

So, the caveat to that is some federal programs may not allow you to do that.

You also cannot double count match.

So, if you have a private source that's matching a program already, you cannot use that same dollar to match our program.

Same thing with the federal fund.

You cannot double count those dollars for multiple programs.

There are specific prohibitions in federal grants that tell you whether you can use those dollars as match or if you can double count the match for that federal program for something else.

So, you need to be very careful about what you're considering for match.

You also can't use these funds to match another project in this fund.

So, just think about that, there is a definition on page 10 item G, where it says grant funds may be used as match for other sources of funding.

However, grant funds awarded from the fund may not be used as match funds for other monies from the funds.

And monies is used to match grants from the fund may not be used as match for other grants.

So you cannot double encumber the dollars either for the program or for the match.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Wendy.

And the next question is, can the applicant's project partner provide the match?

If so, would it be acceptable for this partner to be a consultant who provides the match to the partial waiving of fees?

I don't think so.

That would be in kind and these need to we're looking at for a cash match.

I think if the consultant gave a bunch of money that would be different.

But, we would not accept that as a match.

Are the Federal opportunity zones in Virginia pay priority?

I think it's fair to say that, given the fact that 25% of the funds are dedicated to low income geographic areas,

I think it's just fair to say that there is a great interest in ensuring that that low-income areas, opportunity zones, are funded.

We have lower match requirements and 25% of the fund is dedicated for those areas.

It certainly was a priority for the drafters of the legislation or they wouldn't have sliced off 25% for those purposes.

That 25% doesn't go away.

It will be segregated when the money goes over to the VRA.

If we don't receive enough proposals to spend all of that 25%, the money stays there and we will reserve it for future grant rounds.

A question is, a capacity building grant will not be sufficient for many rural localities to hire and certify a CFM.

I guess I would say there would be the opportunity for someone on staff to become certified.

May not necessarily require a new position, but that's something that we're going to have to work with localities that don't have a lot of resources and see what we can do.

I don't think it was our necessary intention to say that you necessarily have to go hire somebody, but we would like the communities to have someone that works for that community, for that local government to have that have that certification.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And Russ, I'd also like to point out there is no cap on the capacity building grant.

So I'm a little confused about the rationale behind this question, and maybe, John, you can clarify what you mean, because there is no cap on what communities can request for capacity build.

John Bateman

Yeah, thank you for the opportunity to clarify my comment.

John Bateman

When it comes to capacity building and implementation, they very often in rural localities don't happen in the order that you would like them to.

So they may have a staff person that could certify as a floodplain manager, but that's assuming they don't wear 19 other hats.

You know, a lot of these rural localities are spread very thin.

And that's a large ask, asking them to undertake a process by which they would certify a floodplain manager before they're ever eligible for implementation funds, although they may have priority projects that are even identified in their comprehensive plan, or capital improvement plans that need money now.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Understood.

I would ask that communities look at this as an opportunity to build more flood resilience in their communities.

And that starts with having a CFM who is aware and trained in the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and look at it as an opportunity to grow access to other dollars, not just this program, but other dollars as well.

And also because the CFPF will fully cover the cost in some cases, in some communities, depending on what is submitted to us.

It may be the only way that some communities can get a CFM.

It's just an opportunity for folks to really explore this to the fullest extent possible, to make sure that they are building their capacity in their community.

Even if there are other projects that need to be done, without having that CFM on deck to provide you the perspective of what's needed from the National Flood

Insurance Program, it puts your community at a disadvantage.

Russ Baxter

There's a related question, the next one about CFM capacity.

Is there a capacity for creating a shared position within a regional effort?

I haven't really thought about that.

Wendy Howard Cooper

There is no prohibition on that.

You all are doing, for instance, the manual says, I'm pardon me, Russ, for jumping in.

The manual said that it's a locality hired position.

So if you had a regional position that was funded by all of the localities that meets that need.

That person would, however, need to be able to manage the needs of those communities.

So it's not just I'm someone who you all would hire to certify your projects.

It would have to be someone who truly is working as the floodplain administrator type person for these communities, and not just someone who's certifying an application.

Russ Baxter

The next question is, Can these funds be used for projects that are partially on state owned property?

It is a part of a larger regional project with multiple partners.

That's an interesting question.

Ok, I'm not sure we had thought about that as being a possibility.

Cory, I wonder if you might be able to give an example of what that might look like? Are you talking about maybe if there's a state owned building within an area that is flood prone, and they are part of the effort, or is it ...

Corey Miles

Thanks for letting me clarify that.

Corey Miles

What I was thinking is, there's a locality next to a state park and they both are part of the same wetland complex and there's a potential for them to partner and work together.

But part of the project would occur on communities land, and part of the project would occur on state parkland.

Russ Baxter

I guess, we'd have to look at that project, you know, the state owned land would be unlikely to be ever converted to anything, to where it already is.

If it were a wetland or a forest or you know, most of the land, of course not all state owned land is undeveloped.

I guess I live in in the DCR world where virtually all of the land except for some of the infrastructure development and state parks is open space and natural areas.

But there may be situations like that. I would think that the state agency would be given the state's interest in building resilience would be a willing partner.

What the nature of that partnership would be, is something I think would have to be

worked out.

State agencies aren't recipients of these grants, aren't by law recipients of these grants, and so the local government, as defined,

would be the recipient of the grant. And so it's just sort of hard to make a judgement without understanding more of a particular details of a particular proposal.

Next question, Would hiring a consultant to prioritize be eligible under the planning line?

Yes, that we would imagine that localities in terms of both in capacity building and in planning may seek the services of third parties to assist them in those efforts.

That's something that goes on all the time in local governments and the development of comprehensive plans or revisions to zoning ordinances, or lots of other things that local governments do, that bring on private consultant.

So I don't see why that wouldn't be the case here as well.

Wendy, the next one is, can you, in this grant, be used for an existing PDM grant?

Which, I should be, but I don't know what that acronym is.

43:11 - 43:16

Will the funds be considered federal monies, or would they be through DCR?

Wendy Howard Cooper

So I would say that if you have an existing grant at the time of application, you indicate what your capacity to match wise, and you identify those funding sources.

So I would say no.

If you already have an existing grant and you have funds already dedicated, as you should have if you apply for that grant, you received it, you cannot go back and supplant these funds for that purpose.

Russ Baxter

Thank you.

The next question, Are there going to be maintenance requirements for the CFM If the community uses a grant to get certified?

What if the community can't afford to maintain the certificate after the fact?

Again, somewhat of a hypothetical, but that may be the case.

What I would say is that there is no nothing that prevents the ongoing future grant to be a different purpose.

The first grant may be to get someone certified in a future capacity building grant might be to maintain that certification.

So there may be possibilities.

There may also be other sources of funding that community might be able to access to do that.

So, no, we're not going to have enough money to do everything.

We hope that communities as they see the value of having a CFM on staff and someone trained in that would make it a priority when they're shared budgets.

But, of course, we can't predict the future of what every community is going to decide what its priorities are going to be.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Alright, and I have to say, too, that one of the things that we ask for, as in a capacity building grant, is plans for maintaining capacity as necessary, over the long term.

And so, we would be looking for communities to identify strategies.

There are some specific components for capacity building outline on page 20 of the grant manual, that we would expect to see come in and as part of an application for capacity building.

Russ Baxter

The next question is, is that if a regional hazard mitigation plan is part of the localities resilience plan, does the hazard mitigation plan need to be adopted by the local governing body to be considered by DCR to be part of the resilience plan?

This resilience planning aspect has gotten a lot of internal conversation.

We know that not everybody has a resilience plan, sitting on the shelf, and, again, we would hope that the planning grants and capacity building would allow for the development of those plans.

During this first round that we have, we do have the five criteria that are, if you look at Appendix G of the manual, that what we would hope to see.

We do acknowledge that some of these plans may be, in some, say, taking pieces, parts and pieces of other plans, and putting them together.

You know, our interest is just showing that the community is forward thinking.

And we know that, you know, right off the bat, we may not get a full volume marked resilience plan.

But, we think in Appendix G, it gives a pretty good understanding to applicants of the types of things that we would be looking for during this, as we as we begin this program, and that's likely to evolve into something a little more substantive in future grant rounds.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And I'd also like to add and clarify in this question, you're asking if it needs to be adopted by the local governing body to be considered by DCR to be part of the resilience plan.

If you've not adopted it, then it is not really a strategy that you all have agreed to

manage and live up to.

So we would expect that if it hasn't been adopted, that there is some language in your application about why, and when it will be adopted.

If it's going to be changed or updated based on what you're planning to do in the grant manual, we should expect there is some narrative around that hazard mitigation plan,

because that should be one of the primary considerations when you are developing your resilience plan.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Wendy.

The next question, do historical areas or communities have the same criteria, or do they fall under different criteria?

Like, the Indian tribes. No, they did, they would just fall under the same criteria.

I presume the questioner is asking about specifically about designated historic districts or something like that.

48:23 - 48:47

There is language in the manual that where we ask that historic areas and extra structures, be evaluated and considered as they're developing their grant proposals.

But, again, a historical area is just like any other area in a in a municipality or a county, a city or town.

There's nothing special in the manual that gives us any preference or any other special criteria for those types of areas.

Wendy Howard Cooper

The only consideration would be as you are developing your plans, your projects, that you recognize that there are specific NFIP requirements for historical structures.

And Angela, do you want to chime in here about what those specific requirements

are?

Because, as Russ said, there is no specific carve-out for historical structures, but there are very specific requirements for historic structures when you are mitigating, and you are an NFIP Community.

Angela Davis

That is correct.

Angela Davis

Historic structures will still need to be mitigated to the greatest extent possible without messing up their historic designation.

And that will have to be coordinated with the historic resort resources specialist within the community.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Angela.

The next question is, if a county hires a person to become a CFM, what is the duration of funding to pay the salary of this person?

I think that would be dependent on what the grant requested.

I don't think the fund is going to be in the business of permanently paying for the salary of a local employee,

but I see it within the realm of possibility of certification, and then some period that might be requested in the grant

to get that person up and running, and perhaps partial funding of that position could be part of a capacity building proposal.

We'd have to look at that and look specifically at what the grant is requesting.

Next one is, would a private CFM that is hired contractually meet the criteria?

Wendy Howard Cooper

The grant requires that it is a locally hired CFM, meaning it is a local employee.

Russ Baxter

The next question.

Could funds be used to rehabilitate or remove dams constructed under Public law 534, or Public law 566?

Wendy, you probably know what those laws are.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Don't know off the top of my head.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Yeah, just in general, the grant provides the opportunity to remove dams or to rehabilitate dams.

If it is tied to resilience, stream restoration, there are opportunities to do that.

What we would expect is that there is a study done ahead of a dam removal to demonstrate what that benefit is to the community, to the environment, to the restoration of floodplains and wetlands, and those things.

Before that would be considered a viable project.

It is not a one-off grant to do dam removal or dam rehabilitation.

Russ Baxter

Next one, it just says existing grant application with a star.

Nathan, are you there, perhaps you could, Was that an addition to your earlier question?

Nathan McClung, Principal Planner, Town of Vinton

Yeah, that was a question as a follow-up.

Nathan McClung, Principal Planner, Town of Vinton

So, we haven't attained the grant yet.

It's still on that phase of, hasn't been awarded yet, and the PDM grant requires a 25% match.

So, sometimes a lot of grant programs,

you can't mix federal monies, but you can sometimes mix state and federal.

So we're seeing what kind of money this will be.

And to see if we can cut uses to cover that 25%.

Wendy Howard Cooper

These are state dollars, non-federal.

Leigh Anne Weitzenfeld

To clarify here, the PDM grant is a FEMA grants, a pre-disaster mitigation grant if that helps.

Russ Baxter

Thank you.

I should know that.

There are too many acronyms in my business.

The next question is, We are considering applying for a project funding for Regional Greenway BMP to resolve a repetitive shallow flooding issue in a very low-income neighborhood.

The project would likely result in a letter of map revision - LOMR.

My question is, Would this qualify for project funding, even if the Greenway also provides some water quality credits for future development in the area?

Again, I don't want to be in a position of pre-judging proposals, but we certainly recognize that there are going to be co benefits for some of these types of projects.

I think, we would probably consult with DEQ, which runs the Water Quality Nutrient Credit Trading Program, to understand the interaction between the proposals that is presented for funding from the CFPF.

And how that may relate to any requirements that DEQ might have regarding the development or the establishment and certification of credits under the nutrient credit exchange program.

So, I apologize, I can't say, there's no yes or no, but, certainly, the first half of the question is something that would, obviously, I think, be a project that would, you know, would certainly qualify.

Whether it would get funded or not, you know, depends on how much money we got.

I already went through all those contingencies, but the second part of the question, I think, would take a little bit of homework, on our part, in communicating with both the grantee and with DEQ, on that matter.

Next question: Can funds be used to install flood mitigation measures in authorized PL534 and 566 projects?

Somebody smarter than me, probably needs to grab that one.

Wendy, you want to take a stab?

Wendy Howard Cooper

These are the watershed projects?

Again, we would have to look at it and see what it is that you're trying to do.

Russ Baxter

And on its face, obviously, we're in, this fund is in the business of mitigating floods, but I think we need to see what the proposal is relative to those projects, how they're funded, and all that sort of thing.

So, again, are reluctant to give yes and no answers on proposals that we haven't seen yet.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Are you talking about projects that are the federal projects, or NRCS projects?

Or what specific are you're talking about here?

Bruce Julian

I've got some clarification there on, down the list, but these are projects that are sponsored and owned by local entities that there's federally plan, federally designed, but projects that are existing in Virginia, all based on mitigating for flooding.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Yeah, we would have to look at this specifically to see what the requirements are. Are you talking about using the fun as a match to some of the federal projects?

Are you talking about doing something in concert with the federal projects?

Bruce Julian

All of the above, There's some states, that have stepped in where the feds have failed to fund and pick the ball up along with the local county and just taking the project.

It's all, it's on the books, it's ready to go and implement it.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Ok, I think we'd have to see it, and the reason I say that, because I know you're familiar with this, the dam safety side of the house, where we have NRCS projects for Dam Rehabilitation.

Some communities may not want to mitigate the dam to the NRCS standards.

They want to mitigate to a lower standard, which in some cases meets the dam safety regulations, but it doesn't meet NRCS standards.

What we wouldn't do is provide funding to mitigate for a federal project that is below the federal requirements, if that makes sense to you.

So we would really have to look at what that project is.

The manual is clear, that if it's in concert with some other federal project or some other project, then you need to provide that information to us.

So, we'd have to be able to look at it and make a decision like that.

Bruce Julian

Thank you.

Wendy Howard Cooper

You're welcome.

Russ Baxter

Next question is, Can we apply for example,

\$200,000 in grant funding to set up a low interest or no interest loan program?

Meaning, we take the grant funds and locally administer a loan program.

There isn't a request for a loan from the fund.

I don't think that that would be something that would be prohibited.

Obviously, the applicant wouldn't be on the hook for the proper use of those grants, funding, of those grant funds.

Um, maybe I'm wrong.

Wendy would be, I hadn't thought about that.

Wendy Howard Cooper

There's some specific guidance in, in the law that talks about setting up low interest loan funds to communities and that's right on their property and all of those things.

So, that is not something that's eligible with grant funds. That is something that you would need to do through loan funds, I believe.

I have to go back and look specifically at the law for that.

But, that is not something that we would approve in this particular grant round.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Wendy, for your clarification on that.

That's right.

There is specific language I'd forgotten in the statute.

The next question is, how will flood resilience value be calculated for value and scoring?

Wendy Howard Cooper

I think that is the piece that's in the conserve Virginia model that I had reached out to Jason about so, we'll have to get back to them on that particular question if it's about ConserveVirginia.

Sarah Hofman-Graham

Yes, Wendy.

Sarah Hofman-Graham

Thank you!

Russ Baxter

Ok, thank you.

To clarify the pre disaster mitigation grant question.

Can this grant be used as part of the 25% grant match requirements?

Wendy Howard Cooper

It can be only after the grant has been awarded. I would not recommend that you,

if you are in an application phase right now, indicate that you have 25% match from the CFPF because funding is not guaranteed.

Russ Baxter

Oh, and then the next thing is disregard the question.

Sorry about that.

Didn't scroll down far enough.

Next question is.

This is I think, as clarification.

Yes, it's just explaining what Public Law 566 is, and that is the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, with over 200 existing dams in Virginia that may more flood mitigation member measures on the books.

These projects are all sponsored by local, county, state and city governments

The next question is: Do storm water capital improvement plans that use green infrastructure count if you can prove flood/runoff reduction through a hydraulic and hydrologic model?

Yes, I'll let Wendy weigh in on this one as well.

There are there are other sources of funding for example the so-called SLAP Fund, the Storm water Local Assistance Fund that is administered by DEQ that is specific for Storm water Infrastructure improvements.

And so I guess we would have to look at the nature of the project and assess

its relevance to this program versus its relevance to what may be perhaps a more appropriate funding source, such as the SLAP, but again, without saying yay or nay on on this,

we would want to look at that. And we certainly are going to have a lot of conversations with DEQ about storm water management versus flood prevention where, it's not a real bright line between the two.

Wendy Howard Cooper

All right.

Wendy Howard Cooper

You can absolutely use this fund to do studies related to storm water flooding, to make your case, or to build an application for storm water funding sources.

So, I want to be clear about that.

That you can absolutely perform a study to demonstrate or prove the impacts of storm water runoff.

But, right now, we would look at this project, if it was truly a capital project for storm water, we would expect there would be some connection with that other funding source, and not this funding source specifically.

Russ Baxter

That is the last question that has been typed into the chat.

Obviously, if there are further questions, I will certainly willing to wait for those to be tapped in.

I just put up on the slides since we were sort of jumping all over.

We imagined we might go a little more chronologically through the manual.

But that's OK.

But just so everybody has it.

We do have a webpage that has set up specifically that has the manual.

And then any updates to the program.

We've got future dates for sessions such as this.

We're likely to be doing additional training in the future as well.

So that's the page that is listed there.

And we're also asking that instead of people e-mailing me or e-mailing Wendy, if they would send e-mail inquiries to the address that we have set up specifically for this fund.

It just allows us to sort of make sure that we consolidate and, uh, see what's coming in and be able to answer those questions.

Ok, here comes some additional questions for me.

Let me move back over to that section.

Next question we have, since we are now able to submit projects in our resilience plan concurrently until September 3rd, will you all

still tell us within two weeks of plan submission, if it is accepted or not.

It would be good to have confirmation on the plan prior to the work, to put the project together.

That is the case they could be submitted concurrently.

What we would implore potential applicants is to send in their resilience plan prior to submitting their proposals.

There is not a deadline. I think it would be to their benefit for us to have the ability to look at it and get back to the applicant as quickly as we can.

And so we would not recommend them being submitted concurrently, even though the manual does allow for that.

But I think it would be to the benefit of an applicant to spend a little bit of time at the front end, with the plan submission, prior to the close of the grant period on September 3rd.

Wendy Howard Cooper

I would echo that, because what you may run into, if you submit your plan at the time of application, is that you may get a denial for your project

because the resilience plan is not adequate, and there's no additional time for you to cure your application.

So I would strongly urge you all to submit those resilience plans as soon as possible.

Russ Baxter

The next question is here.

Excuse me, Let me get my scrolling right.

Do the projects have to address a repetitive loss area?

No, they don't have to.

Wendy Howard Cooper

I would like to elaborate there, they do not have to address a repetitive loss area.

But if you are not addressing a repetitive loss area, there should be some narrative about why you are not doing so.

Do not have repetitive loss in your community, and you're choosing not to address it.

Why would you not address the most severe situations in your community first, not to say that we won't fund

something that doesn't address repetitive loss, but there must be some narrative around why you are not addressing that specific area.

Russ Baxter

Thank you, Wendy.

Do you all elaborate with the localities if the need arises to alert that a problem exists?

That is a critical need if there is a public cry by local residents that are not being heard.

I think what they're saying, the question is getting to is, if there is a section of a community that is not being heard by their governing body, or the potential applicant did a fund, is there some way around that?

Our hope is that localities will take seriously

what the General Assembly isn't as intended with this law it, and that is to look at communities holistically.

To look at communities and areas in communities that have been traditionally underserved or ignored.

No, we don't.

It's really hard to answer that question.

All I can say is that it is certainly a priority of this program to address issues and flooding issues, and, obviously, particularly in areas that may not have received the kind of attention in the past that they should have.

And, so, I suspect we will be getting information and inquiries from local residents in addition to potential applicants.

We will, no doubt, be alerted to, we have a network of staff now that have direct lines into community, work with communities, and so we're going to keep our ears open, but it is by law, the local government, as defined.

That is the one that presents the application to the fund.

But, again, I think it's fairly clear in the grant manual, it's certainly fairly clear in the Code of Virginia, that a good portion of these monies, 25%, are being set aside for areas that are likely to have been traditionally underserved.

And so, maybe that's the best answer I can give at this point.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And I would like to add to that, we're clear in what we are expecting a resilience plan to look like for projects.

And if we receive resilience plans that do not address those particular issues, if there are areas in a community that are excluded for how those problems will be addressed, if they're only addressing particular areas of a community in a resilience plan or resilience strategy.

And they are not looking at and documenting the existence, social, economic, and natural hazards throughout the community, that there's not an equity based strategy in place,

those plans would not be approved.

So we want to be clear with folks that, yes, people may already have resilience plans in place.

They may have already done a great deal of work.

But if those resilience plans do not address whole community, they are not adequate for this program.

Russ Baxter

The next question that appears, this is following up on the recurrent or repetitive flooding question.

I would just call the attention to page four and number two: under the overview and authority, monies in the fund may be used to mitigate.

So, it's a matter of construction that those conditions apply shall apply to the use of the monies from the fund, but then in number two, they may be used to mitigate, that are subject to.

So it is not a requirement, the shall doesn't apply to number two, but it applies to 1 through 4.

And that's just the way sometimes law is written, it's a little bit confusing.

But, Wendy was correct, certainly we would expect those areas to receive attention, and we would be very curious as to why they would not be.

But it is not mandatory that the funds are used to do that, because of the use of the word may.

Wendy Howard Cooper

And it speaks to recurrent or repetitive.

Not only repetitive and a must.

Russ Baxter

Next question is, Will you review a local resilience plan that hasn't been adopted by the locality

if it's prior to the grant period, if there were changes needed?

You know, I'm retiring so before the end of the grant period so Wendy,

Why don't you take that one?

Wendy Howard Cooper

Sure.

Wendy Howard Cooper

No, we expect to receive a locally adopted resilience plan.

We can't, and especially with the timeframe that we have in place right now, with this very short timeline of being able to review resilience plans.

And that's why we have said in the manual that this is not the only funding strategy. If people need time to get their resilience plan in place,

another grant round is going to open up and to launch.

There's no detriment to not applying for a project in this first grant round.

It is actually to your benefit to ensure that you have a resilience plan that meets the requirements of this program before you apply for a project.

So I would encourage you, that if you do not have a locally adopted resilience plan, that meets the requirement of this plan, not to apply for a project,

to take the opportunity to apply for a planning grant, to ensure that you can meet the standards of this program.

Russ Baxter

And, again, I've just put up the schedule, the second round starts August 5th.

So, things are gonna happen pretty quick.

And then, again, as I said, we're also looking as early in 22, as having another grant round.

And so people, I think, are feeling a little anxious and urgent about participating in this first grant round.

You know, we're coming out of the box with a lot of opportunity over, really, what is essentially a seven month period, maybe eight months for folks to,

absorb the grant manual, work with their local governments, their governing bodies and those other things.

And so certainly, we want to get this money out the door.

But we also want to make sure that folks are in a position to use it most productively and are forward thinking in how they're planning to use these monies.

Next question, can you provide any additional perspective on how ecological goals might compare with economic and public health property goals when scoring applications?

There is, in the scoring criteria, some benefit for the co-benefits for water quality, but it is a relatively small bonus, or scoring criteria.

I think, really, what we're most interested in it, it isn't really economic, or public health property goals, as well as public safety goals,

flood resilience goals, I mean, there's a whole lot of goals that are baked into the underlying statute and that are baked into this manual.

And those are reflected in the appendices that show the scoring criteria that we have established for each of the each of the categories.

And so I would refer the questioner to the scoring criteria.

And that ought to give you a pretty good sense of what we think is important, and what we think is less so, but still perhaps, should be considered when a grant proposal is being evaluated.

Will there be any future guidance on the resiliency plan requirements?

Compare those to FEMA Hazard mitigation plan requirements?

Yes, I think it's fair to say that, coming right out of the box, the resiliency plan elements are not as well formed as they will be in the future.

And so, I would suspect, particularly, I don't think there'll be a lot of change for these first two grant rounds because they really, we don't have time to rewrite a grant manual.

Or add a whole lot, you know, between now and August 5th.

But, as we move this program into the future, those kinds of questions are going to be addressed.

And we will have more specificity and particulars related to resilience plans.

And, again, wanting those up against other plans we already address.

If you look in Appendix G, some of the things that you would have in a Hazard Mitigation plan are the kinds of things that we're looking for, even in these initial submission.

So, if there are further questions on that, send us a note through the through the e-mail box, and we could have an offline discussion if there are any specific questions related to that.

That's the last question I see in the chat.

If there aren't any further, Wendy, if you'd like to make any remarks or wrap up, please do.

Wendy Howard Cooper

Certainly. I really appreciate all of you being on the call today.

I want you all to know, again, I can't emphasize enough that it is better to apply for a planning grant to ensure your resilience plan is up to par, than to send in a resilience plan and a project plan, and be denied.

The timeline for these, the second grant round, is such that there is no harm in that funds that are not awarded in the first grant round, or the second grant round, for that matter, will be made available in future grant rounds.

So, those dollars will continue to build and roll as we continue to add funding to this project.

We are not looking to just fund projects.

We're looking to fund projects that meet the resilience goals that we have for the Commonwealth.

So this is not going to be, while this has been a very hurried process, there is a thoughtful process behind why we're doing this.

So I just want to make sure that everyone understands that there will be opportunity, but build your capacity.

Build your resilience strategy so that it absolutely covers your community so that you are more successful.

Russ Baxter

I would just say amen to to Wendy's comments again.

Thank you all for taking the time.

You know, we're rolling this out.

This is the first grant round of what will be many.

The money doesn't go anywhere, it goes over to the VRA, the general assembly can't

take it back.

And so, you know, this is a fund that's going to be around for a while, and it is not something that has to be done this summer.

We're certainly going to be making grants through it from this first grant round, but I think the message we're trying to get across is that we want to be in for the long haul.

We want to be with working with localities, local governments over the long term, and to make Virginia more resilient and better prepared to address flooding, whether it be on the coast or whether it be in the mountains.

So that is the approach that we're taking, looking at this long term.

And again, thank you so much for your interest in this.

Again, any future, we already have two additional question and answer webinars set up, and those are on the page.

I'll scroll to that page, just so you can see it again, right here.

You can see that page.

So any updates to the program, any addition, , the Q and A ,the transcript from this, or the recording from this session, will be posted there, so that's your go to spot for this program.

And, again, as I previously asked, if we can focus questions or inquiries to the e-mail address that is on this page, that would be most helpful for us internally, to be able to organize and make sure that we're giving consistent and reliable answers to any inquiries that we get.

So I'll give you back a little bit of your day.

But again, thank you for taking the time to be with us today, and we look forward to working with all of you and fulfilling the laudable goals of this program,

so thank you and we'll see you soon.

Bye bye.